



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
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MMS Begins Planning Process to Conduct Sale in Eastern Gulf of Mexico

Federal Register Notice to Announce Proposed Federal Oil and Gas Lease Sale

NEW ORLEANS — The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Minerals Management Service (MMS) has begun the planning process to gather information and conduct an environmental review of a small portion of the Federal waters in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico (EGOM) Planning Area with the publication of a notice in today’s [*Federal Register*](#).

The notice serves two purposes: as an information-gathering step to ensure that all interests and concerns regarding oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development resulting from the proposed sale are communicated to MMS; and, to solicit input to develop the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), which will update the environmental and socioeconomic analyses conducted for the EIS that was completed in 2001 for the original “Sale 181 Area.” The area covered by this notice encompasses approximately 134 unleased blocks covering approximately 500,000 acres.

The proposed sale, termed Lease Sale 224 and tentatively scheduled for early 2008, was mandated by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, signed by the President in December 2006. The sale will include a small part of the EGOM Planning Area, more than 125 miles off the Florida coast and completely west of the Military Mission Line (86 degrees, 41 minutes West longitude).

As part of the preparation process for the environmental review, MMS will hold scoping meetings to solicit comments from the public. These comments will aid MMS in determining significant issues and alternatives for analysis. The public scoping meetings are scheduled for March 1 in Pensacola, Florida, and March 7 in Larose, Louisiana. Additional information will be published for the scoping meetings, including specific locations and times.

(MORE)

The public may submit comments during the next 30 days by using the MMS' Public Connect online commenting system, or in written format, or by email. All comments must be received no later than March, 16, 2007. The notice of these meetings and details on submitting comments are also published in today's *Federal Register*.

Copies of the *Federal Register* notice are available at:

MMS Public Information Unit

1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard

New Orleans, LA 70123-2394,

or telephone 1-800-200-GULF, or via the MMS website at www.mms.gov.

